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ABSTRACT

An ethnographic study of a primary and secondary Australian Catholic boys school--the Christian Brothers College (CBC)--examined the historical relationship between Catholic schools, Catholic religious formation, and social mobility in Australia. The methodology used includes classroom observation, interviews, participation in social and religious activities, and analysis of documents. Results include the following: religious education at CBC competes unfavorably with academic priorities; the overwhelming academic emphasis of the school, coupled with a restrictive entrance policy and the historical emphasis on social mobility, denies an absolute priority for religious formation; coordination of religious education is vague and remote; religion is regarded as a discrete subject unit. The historical task of educating Catholic youth for social mobility is seen as part of the apostolate of the Christian Brothers to serve the needy. However, this mission of service has become a conservative reproductive mission--one of equipping middle class Catholics to take their places in a predominantly middle class society. Students are not taught to question the social order. (RM)

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RELIGION AND REPRODUCTION IN AN AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, 1985

RELIGION & REPRODUCTION IN AN AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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1 ESTABLISHING A CATHOLIC IDENTITY

(a) Catholic Education in Australia

The essential role of Australian Catholic schools has been to maintain and develop a sense of Catholic identity, both social and religious. In spite of changes in society, in education, and within the Church itself during the past century, the official Catholic position is still that such an identity can best be maintained by isolating Catholic children in separate schools in which a totally Catholic environment facilitates Catholic socialisation. This view has been consistently used to argue for the necessity of Catholic schools (Praetz, 1982).

In the 1870s and 1880s the Australian Catholic Bishops fought to establish a separate system of Catholic education which, they hoped, would serve all Australian Catholic children. Their successors have continued the battle. But the struggle was about more than simply the construction of a Catholic education system. The prolonged campaign of the Catholic hierarchy and clergy, through persuasion, cajolery and the use of religious sanctions, ensured that the issue of Catholic education came to symbolise Catholic solidarity and the willingness to fight for religious, political and social status. The galvanisation of Catholic consciousness was largely the result of the identification of Catholicism with working-class Irishness (Fogarty, 1959; O'Farrell, 1977).

Once Catholic consciousness had been sufficiently aroused by the bishops and clergy in the late nineteenth century, many Catholics unquestioningly supported their schools and the separate system of education grew rapidly. Many others, who at first persisted in sending children to public schools, were brought into line by bishops' statements that they were failing in their parental duty and so wilfully living in a state of sin, thereby precluding themselves from the sacraments. Such

methods, and the persuasion or coercion of parish priests, resulted in between a half and two thirds of Catholic children receiving education in Catholic schools throughout most of this century (O'Farrell, 1977). To those involved in the struggle to establish them, the schools provided tangible illustrations of active and flowering Catholicism. To loyal Catholics the Catholic school became the dominant reality as well as the dominant symbol of the Catholic faith itself - the school is, therefore the Church is (Crudden, 1972).

That the overt role of Catholic schools is to reproduce Catholic religious traditions has, since the foundation of Catholic schools in Australia, been maintained as the official justification for their existence (Edwards, 1976; Fahy, 1980). Analysis of the history of Catholic education in Australia suggests, however, that in practice support for Catholic schools has been based as much upon social as religious motives. Of particular significance is the importance that was given in Catholic schools to examination results. This gives an indication of the priority which Catholics and their hierarchy have placed upon the social advancement of their children. The schools, especially secondary schools, were seen as the important agents of scuh social advancement (Fogarty, 1959).

From the early days of the twentieth century, the emerging network of Catholic schools was maintained largely by the inexpensive labour of Irish nuns and brothers who reinforced the transplanted Irish nationalism of Australian Catholics and thus intensified their "dualistic division of the world into Catholics and non Catholics" (O'Brien, 1977:132). The very survival of these schools, however, was threatened in the late 1960s and early 1970s when a decline of entrants to the religious Orders and the defection of many religious coincided with swelling school populations. It was at that stage that the long and often bitter battle for "state aid" began to bear fruit.

In Australia, both federal and state government assistance to Catholic schools grew after 1963, increased prodigiously during the period of the Whitlam (Labor) federal government (1972-75), was maintained and then extended by the subsequent Fraser (Liberal) governments (1975-82), and is continuing under the present Hawke (Labor) government. Federal and state monies now account for most of the expenditure, especially salaries of lay teachers, in these schools. Enrolments in Catholic schools, particularly secondary schools, continue to grow at a time when enrolments in public schools are showing a slight decline. Catholic schools, however, despite massive state funding, still cannot cope with the numbers seeking entry. Many Catholic pupils are forced to attend non-Catholic schools and so are largely ignored by their Church. Nevertheless, with the security of government financial support, the future of independent Catholic schools seems assured.

The historical relationship between Catholic schools, Catholic religious formation and social mobility has characterised the history of Catholic education in Australia. The purpose of this paper is to place the current, specific circumstances of a single Catholic school within this perspective. The data upon which the paper is based were generated at Christian Brothers College (CBC), Newburyport, by means of ethnographic methods over a period of more than two years. CBC is a Catholic boys primary and secondary school (grades 3 to 12) which is owned and operated by the "Irish" Christian Brothers whose members now comprise only 20% of the staff. This Order has dominated the education of Catholic boys in Australia for the past century. The research employed participant observation, tape-recorded open-ended interviews, classroom observation, participation in school and community social and religious activities, and analysis of documents such as correspondence, memos, year books. The accumulation of data accelerated greatly when three other researchers joined Angus in the project during part of 1982 (Bates, Smith, Angus, Watkins, 1982).

(b) The Brothers and the Social Mobility of Catholics

One area of agreement amongst the nine teaching brothers at CBC is that the Christian Brothers in Australia have been particularly successful at educating working class boys for placement in middle class careers. In the first half of the twentieth century, according to CBC participants, this was considered to be of crucial importance in "establishing a Catholic community that could stand on its own feet in all sorts of areas of society" to the point where "these days, now, you have got people with Catholic background as leaders in these groups".

The class mission which is suggested here is much more complex than a simple attempt to ensure that Catholics made good in Australian society. The rationale behind the Brothers' determined policy to educate for upward social mobility has several dimensions - the most fundamental being that concern for working class boys is seen as a direct link with the aim of the founder of the order, Brother Edmund Rice, to assist the needy of early 19th century Ireland.

The Irish background of Australian Catholics had predisposed them to rally together to combat the prejudice towards them that was an integral part of a society dominated by the "Established" Church of England (Fogarty, 1959). Instances of discrimination, particularly during the depression, did much to reinforce the celebrated "ghetto mentality" of Australian Catholics (Campion, 1982; Selleck, 1978). Brother Gordon recalls that time:

> We did have this move up in socio-economic level of the Catholic, mainly Irish. The problem was getting jobs during the depression - and not only that, there was a lot of sectarianism. There were a number of firms that wouldn't employ Catholics and who would blatantly admit it. It was in the paper which was accompanied by a little suggestion that "no Catholics need apply" - there was no secret about it. You had the Freemason influence as well.

Good examination results were a high priority for Catholic boys to enable them to qualify for entrance to the public service - one means of escaping prejudice in employment since entry was determined by competitive examinations. Again, Brother Gordon explains:

> Once [Catholic students] achieved that level of matriculation ... where were they going to get jobs? The answer for a vast majority of those people was the public service because they had nowhere else to go. And the result was that those fellows, who moved into the public service in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, they are occupying the important positions now.

Catholic children in Australia were therefore defined as "needy" - victims of their class location and of widespread discrimination which made examination success and the resultant public service entrance or, later, university scholarships, especially important. The educational mission of the Christian Brothers is thus associated with a mission of justice and the defence of the human dignity of Catholics. The brothers at CBC agree with Brother O'Hara, a veteran of more than forty-five years teaching in Brothers' schools, that:

> ... there are Catholic people now in good positions ... and in their day, without the Brothers' schools, they would not have had that opportunity. They may have had the ability but not the opportunity to get where they are today. And when you look at the founder starting [in 19th century Ireland] - there were so many poor and they couldn't get jobs and there was no education for them. So he did what he could then to help the poor to sort of get some status.

But the religious component of an attempt to shift the class location of Catholics is more complex yet. Brother Gordon explains the nexus between social advancement and religious and moral influence:

> It was an aim that was being tackled by the bishops and the Brothers were just working under their directions. It was also to enable Catholics to move into positions of influence ... so that the message of Jesus might be hard in those areas.

Yet, despite the perceived success of the mission of service to the Catholic working class, some Brothers at CBC wonder whether the original mission of Brother Edmund Rice is now being pursued as rigorously as it

should be. They speculate about ways in which the founder's mission of assisting the needy through education could be more appropriately applied. Brother Sterling, indeed, wonders whether the current apostolate has diverged from the founder's intention in that genuinely "needy" boys should be a more conspicuous target of the Brothers' educational enterprise:

> I would wonder ... if Edmund Rice came to the city, where would he go? ... He went to the slums outside Waterford. What we ought to be doing is heading towards the housing commission estates.

Brother Sterling has another reason for suggesting that the Brothers should withdraw from some of their established schools like CBC to concentrate their resources in areas of underprivilege. Almost to a man, he and the other Brothers, whose presence at CBC has declined to a mere 20% of the total teaching staff, explain that the materialism, consumerism and lack of discipline, which they believe characterises modern society, especially middle class society, is largely responsible for a decline in religiousity and lack of vocations. Brother Gordon's summary is typical:

> I think it is the consumerism of our society, our concentration on our material possessions ... which is, to a large extent, excluding concentration on the more important spiritual values which, I think, is one of the reasons why perhaps religious vocations have somewhat diminished.

The irony that the Brothers have contributed to such materialism by emphasising education for social advancement, treating education as a commodity, does not seem to be appreciated by these Brothers. It is small wonder, then, that some of the more upwardly mobile and affluent Catholic parents of Newburyport, themselves educated for social mobility by the Brothers, now choose to send their sons to Newburyport College or Newburyport Grammar instead of to CBC. Indications are that almost fifteen percent of boys attending these very expensive and prestigious Protestant colleges are Catholics.

2 A CATHOLIC SCHOOL

(a) A Religious Ethos

There is agreement amongst Catholic educators that Catholic schools should be different from their public and Protestant counterparts. Indeed, the long struggle to maintain an independent network of Catholic schools is founded upon the premise that Catholic schools are different (Fogarty, 1959, 1964; O'Farrell, 1957; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 1976). The essence of that difference, according to the argument, is that in Catholic schools there is no clear division between religious and secular knowledge. Instead, the teachings of the Church should infuse all lessons of the school day, and prayer and religious symbolism should permeate the consciousness of teachers and pupils.

Any outsider to CBC can readily discern a religious difference that marks it off from other sorts of schools. The impressions of Smith, who spent six weeks working in CBC, illustrate the point:

> As a non-Catholic and only casual visitor to parochial schools in America, I was overwhelmed by the religious ambiance of the school. The prayers at the beginning of most classes, the religious statues, pictures and symbols, and the formal religious classes seemed everywhere. The Brothers, their community, their participation in all parts of the curriculum and in all kinds of activities provided a presence through the school. Visits by local priests and priests from elsewhere in Australia and around the world extended that feeling of omnipresence (Smith, 1982:17).

Symbols of Catholicism pervade CBC, but uncertainty exists regarding the penetration of religious symbolism and activity into the consciousness of pupils and of teachers. At best, the religious imagery serves as a constant reminder of the shared religious purpose of the faith community of teachers and pupils. At worst, the artefacts and symbols provide merely a superficial religious gloss to legitimate CBC's separate existence. Certainly, the impact of it all upon the boys is variable - the contrast being most apparent in the reactions of primary and senior secondary pupils regarding the importance of religion in their school lives.

The CBC primary school appears to offer real opportunities for religious involvement. For instance, the significance to pupils, parents and teachers of the preparation of primary pupils for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist is marked. Smith captures the essence of this religious experience:

> ... the involvement of the primary boys in the Reconciliation experience, the close participation of parents, and the preparation by teachers seemed as vital and meaningful as any religious ceremony could be (Smith, 1982:17).

The Reconciliation and Eucharist mark the culmination of careful preparation and instruction in the primary classrooms of CBC and demonstrate a serious attempt to make the school a "faith community" in accordance with the emphasis of the second Vatican Council.

For John Carlton, a Christian Brothers for twelve years and then fourteen years a lay teacher at CBC in Newburyport, it is this concept of a "faith community" that provides the rationale for Catholic education in a post-Vatican II context. Church teaching, he argues, should be based upon a theme of social concern:

Question:	Isn't the whole justification for a Catholic school that Catholic education is somehow different?
John Carlton:	That's right - a Catholic school should be different.
Question:	In what way?
John Carlton:	There should be a whole atmosphere about the place. There should be concern amongst the pupils and co-operation. There should be a spirit of concern for people in the community, for the under-privileged, and a desire to help.
Question:	Couldn't you say that <u>any</u> good school would encourage attitudes like that?
John Carlton:	Oh yes - but in a Catholic school you should have all this tied in with the teaching of the Church. It should support Church teaching ... It's in the primary schools that we really need Catholic education. And the real strength is that the class teacher is the religion teacher and so religion can come into all subjects.

While many teachers at CBC would agree with Carlton, the issue of what constitutes a good Catholic education in the modern post-Vatican world is a matter of debate. But according to Brother Dowsett, one of the depleted generation of post-Vatican Christian Brothers, that debate is not openly or formally confronted at CBC. In his opinion, the place of religion in the school is extremely problematic:

> We do have a very particular and very strong aim to promote the religious education of the students who come to the place. If you look at a timetable, the kids have a religion period each day. So technically, on the surface, that's a very important aim and some attention is being given to it timewise. I often question how effective it is for lots of reasons. I wonder as a staff, particularly, just how clear we are on our goals. Since I've been here (almost three years) we haven't had formally any session where we've got together just to thrash out what we are trying to do. What are our goals in the school? What are our goals in the religious education? I suppose some people would say, well, that's just understood, we try to develop the faith of the students - but ... I question to a certain extent that everybody has a pretty fair idea of exactly what we're trying to do.

Brother Dowsett's concern that staff consensus be sought regarding the religious aims of the school reflects the faith community orientation of post-Vatican Catholicism. He can find little evidence, however, to indicate that religion is taken seriously by the staff as a whole. His emphasis upon the "surface" attention given to the teaching of religion recurs in the accounts of several teachers and raises questions about the priority that is given to religion at CBC:

Question: What is the strength of the religious education element in the school's programme?

Cameron Pont: Not as good as I would like it to be. I think that if the school sets itself up to be a church school then its number one priority should be the teaching of that religion that they say they are going to teach. The matriculation results are damn important, but the most important thing - the fact that they had their daily religious education lesson - that was a good thing, too. But if an extra period was to be taken, it was always the fifth period - which happens to be the religion period. This is a little cock-eyed view of things.

The cock-eyedness of this situation is, of course, that treating religion period as a time for administrative purposes suggests that, in the balance of priorities at CBC, the scales are tipped towards an emphasis upon examination results over religious education. School assemblies are held during the period usually allocated for religious instruction for year 12 pupils so that valuable time is not taken from the academic subjects for which end-of-year external examinations are held. In fact, the timetable was drawn up by David Welsh with this in mind:

> One thing we do is timetable all year 12 religion at the same time [and] all year 11 at the same time. That is a good thing because if we want to see the whole grade for any reason at all ... they are not taken away from academic subjects.

At other year levels, too, the religion period rather than others is used for organisational matters. If the religion period, itself, is not sacrosanct, this may also indicate that religion does not pervade the entire life of the school in the way that some teachers would like it to:

Question: What about the religious life of the school outside the religious education classes?

Peter Montini: Well, there isn't much sign of it really. Now every teacher is supposed to say a prayer at the start of the period and I don't know if that happens all the time ... I don't think there is all that much evidence of it being a Catholic school other than the fact that there is supposed to be a prayer said at the start of the period, the religion class, and that there is a statue or similar in every room. Other than that, I don't think religion plays a very important part in the school although there is the underlying theme that that is what we are here for - and that this is the difference between this school and, say, a normal high school - the fact that there is some sort of religious theme going through the school.

Peter Montini's association with CBC has been a long one. He was a pupil there during his secondary years and returned nine years ago as a beginning teacher. He is uncritical of the place of religion at the school but perceives a contradiction between the "underlying theme" that marks out CBC as being different from other schools and its only partial translation into religious practice.

More critical of the religious life of CBC, or rather, of the perceived absence of a sufficiently strong religious focus to distinguish it from other schools, is Cameron Pont. Like John Carlton, he is a long serving ex-Brother and lay teacher who argues that the school's religious orientation should be more publicly visible in its daily life:

> We have tried for years to say that the chapel ought to be a focal point of the school and [that] if people are going to pray then they ought to come to the chapel. That seems to me to be the spot to meet daily to pray ... There is nothing organised in the senior school where they come together as a community.

Some other teachers agree that CBC's religious focus should be more explicit. Brother Jones, for instance, searches for the "radical difference" between Catholics and others, and argues that the school's priority should not be upon examination results but upon the faith of pupils:

> I believe very clearly that, if we are not a committed Catholic school, I see absolutely no point in our existence at all ... I will put it in a negative way which is perhaps wrong - but ... if I felt kids were coming here because Mr Carlton was a crash-hot teacher and Brother Jones was a crash-hot teacher and Mr Y. was a crash-hot teacher - well, I see no point in that kind of exercise at all. There are plenty of crash-hot teachers in all kinds of other schools. I keep asking myself what is the radical difference between ourselves [as Catholic educators] and others. And, as a Catholic, I believe that it is developing the faith of students, number one - but not just in a sort of a narrow "I will pour religion down your throat" sort of thing ... I believe with fellows in year 11 and 12 that they have to be converted at that age.

The religious orientation should not mean, however, that other pursuits are neglected, but rather that they become invested with deeper meaning. Such an orientation assumes that religious thinking informs all school activities - including sporting and academic ones:

> Question: Do you think there is a tendency in Brothers' schools to emphasise the [examination] results?
>
> Brother Jones: Yes. It comes over like that ... I started to think about it a lot and I have worked it out this way. Hopefully, the fact that they have been winning football and ... that they can do well in their exams to me should be a sign of something deeper and something far better - that we are succeeding in the [religious] mission.

(b) Religion and CBC priorities: Only good Catholics need apply

Implicit or explicit in many of the comments that have been noted above is the suspicion that religion is, in a de facto sense, not the main priority of a significant number of staff members, and that the policies of the school also fail to confirm the formal priority that many teachers believe should be given to religion in a Catholic school.

To gain entrance to CBC prospective pupils must satisfy an entrance examination (Test of Learning Aptitude). And in a situation in which there are more applicants than places, preference is given to boys whose parents have "demonstrated their commitment to Catholic education" by sending them to Catholic primary schools. Parents are expected to be practicing Catholics.

Given the weight of research, both in Australia and overseas (Leavy, 1972; Flynn, 1975; Brothers, 1964; Greely, McCready, McCourt, 1976; Fahy, 1980), which indicates that the religious effectiveness of Catholic schools upon pupils is directly related to the religiosity of their homes, such religious screening prompts the argument of one senior lay teacher that:

> You are really backing a winner from the start as these kids come from [good Catholic] homes. It makes teaching them a piece of cake.

Despite the "religious qualification" for entrance, however, many teachers believe that not all pupils do in fact come from "good Catholic homes". There is a feeling that some parents send children to CBC so that the school will provide the instruction in religion that is lacking in the home. Some staff, in fact, talk about parents "who expect us to bring their kids up for them". In Brother Ernest's opinion, CBC offers "security" for such parents:

> Parents send their sons to Brothers' schools so that parental functions can be done there that are overlooked, perhaps, at home ... [Although] the role of Catholic schools is partly to assist parents in their obligations in the raising of their children, naive Catholic parents delegate or abrogate their responsibility in this regard by sending their children to CBC.

Teachers also argue that many parents send boys to the school for other than religious reasons - mainly because of CBC's emphasis upon an academic curriculum and its reputation for discipline and examination results. Brother Jones is critical of the attitude of many parents:

> There is too much of this, "If I send the boy to CBC the Brothers - and that means everybody [on the staff] - if they wave a wand then John will get his HSC and he will be a marvellous kid as a result.

There is amongst some teachers, especially religion teachers, criticism of parents who regard the essential function of CBC as being the preparation of candidates for the Higher School Certificate (H.S.C.) examination. Yet, as has been seen, some members of staff strongly believe that the prominence which should be given to the religious mission of the school has been usurped by that given to academic achievement which may lead to social acceptance and advancement. They point to the admissions policy as evidence that the school's orientation is primarily towards examination results. The entrance examination excludes the least able students. Zoning regulations mean that Catholic boys from the less affluent area of Newburyport must attend a Catholic school in their district or a public school. Although fees are minimal, they also present a hurdle to the least affluent of Newburyport's Catholics.

Such exclusion seems rather at odds with the oft-stated mission of the Brothers of serving the needy (Angus, 1984).

2 TEACHING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(a) Religion as a discrete subject

The data indicate that few lay teachers, at least in the secondary areas, are willing to take classes in religious education. This is especially the case, of course, for teachers who are not Catholics. Thus, the task of teaching religion in the secondary school falls mainly to the Brothers:

Interviewer: Brother Carter gave me a thing from the Catholic Education Office. What I found interesting was the number of non-Catholic lay teachers - there is about 30%. Is that a problem for timetabling?

David Welsh: No, it is not a problem for timetabling because we do have enough teachers for the religious education. We are not stuck. Perhaps one day it will become a problem but as long as we keep the Brothers it won't be - because if they teach nothing else they could teach religion ... Mind you, we have got Catholics on the staff here who won't teach religion - they don't feel qualified to or don't want to ... What we [have to] do is double up classes - Brother Carter teaches two religion classes in the day, I teach two, Brother Gordon teaches two, Brother Bourke teaches two.

Implicit in what David Welsh says is the view that religious education can be treated as a discrete unit for timetabling - yet the essence of Catholic schooling is that Catholicism should pervade the entire curriculum. While such an approach to religion was possible when CBC was staffed by religious who had committed their lives to the reproduction of the Catholic faith, the religious theme becomes fragmented when non-Catholics and luke-warm Catholics are employed as teachers. A way of thinking that treats religion more and more as a separate subject is also indicated by the incidental remarks of some teachers:

Interviewer: Is [religious education] the area that really concerns you about the laicisation of a Brothers' school?

Brother Hourigan: No, it wouldn't. You get lay teachers who have done catechetical courses.

Interviewer: At this school you have a fairly wide range of lay people and I would imagine that you have not only a variety of commitment amongst Catholics on the staff, but a large number of non-Catholics on the staff as well.

Brother Hourigan: But these non-Catholics wouldn't have religion periods.

Again, religion is treated as a subject that is separated out from other subjects, one that Catholic lay teachers can be trusted with, at least at junior levels, provided they have acquired the requisite religious knowledge by taking an appropriate course.

(b) The distribution of religious and lay teachers

Apart from David Welsh, who was once a Christian Brother, all teachers of religion in years 9 through to 12 are Brothers. Yet only one Brother teaches only one of six religion classes in the year 7 and 8 area. No Brothers teach in the primary area. Through his years of association with CBC as both pupil and teacher, Peter Montini has developed his own theory about the distribution of religious and lay teachers to religion classes:

Interviewer: On the whole, you don't actually think religion plays a very important part [in the life of the school]?

Peter Montini: No. You see, I don't think that really all that many teachers let it play all that much of a role.

Interviewer: Quite a few lay staff do teach religious education.

Peter Montini: Well, I think it is more by just being asked to rather than actually wanting to. They have just been told, "Well, here is your teaching load and that includes R.E." ... I think you will find as you get higher up the school that if there are lay staff teaching religion they were either Brothers themselves or people who are very much involved in that sort of life - and it is not just anyone that is told to do it ... I think up there it is regarded as being more serious and what you say lower down the school perhaps doesn't matter.

At least one teacher of religion in the junior secondary area feels that he is simply plugging a timetable gap by agreeing to take a religion class:

Interviewer: There are a number of lay teachers who teach religion ...

Jim Morris: I'm one of them - which is crazy to me because I have got no background [training in religious education].

Interviewer: How do you come to be teaching religious education?

Jim Morris: I went here, I suppose. Doesn't it make sense to you?

Interviewer: Did you volunteer for it?

Jim Morris: No, I was asked. And at that time if you want a job you will do anything.

Interviewer: So how does your teaching of religious education differ from the teaching that you received?

Jim Morris: Well, for a start, even if you wanted to include all the Church dogma, I couldn't.

Interviewer: Because you are not sufficiently familiar with it?

Jim Morris: Yes, that's right. I think my R.E. would be more social education oriented rather than religious ... I don't think I am fulfilling their [the Brothers'] expectations of what R.E. should be. But it is just convenient that I am plugging a gap.

Jim's inference that he is prepared to take religion classes simply because he needs the job adds support to the claims of the timetabler and the religion coordinator that many lay teachers are unwilling to teach religious education. His answer to the question of how he came to be teaching religious education - "I went here, I suppose" - is fraught with meaning. In his opinion, the assumption of the CBC administrators is that an ex-CBC boy can be trusted with the teaching of religion - at least to junior secondary classes. Moreover, he, along with his fellow teachers of religion, is expected to devise his own syllabus (although provided with very broad guidelines issued by the Catholic Education Office).

Judging the extent to which teachers identify with the Catholic ethos of CBC is no easy matter. It appears that many lay teachers are reluctant to take classes in religious education and also feel uneasy in talking about religion. Moreover, there is clearly no consensus regarding what counts as religious education or what emphasis should be given to it. In such circumstances, the promise of a deeply felt religious unity that is suggested by the openly displayed religious symbols is not realised at CBC. The pervasive imagery disguises the fragmentation of the once uniform reproduction of a formal and traditional religious culture that was the concern of a wholly Christian Brothers' staff. But it does more - it also suggests a confidence and an unshrinking resoluteness regarding religion that is not found within CBC.

4 WHAT COUNTS AS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?

(a) The Vatican Council and the transformation of religious education

At least one point upon which there is agreemnt at CBC is that religious education is an extremely difficult subject to teach well.

In the mixture of instruction and persuasion that makes up religious education Brother Jones gives priority to persuasion. His view is that boys, no matter how religious their backgrounds, must be "converted" to the fullness of their faith during their school years. Those members of staff who were pupils at CBC some fifteen years ago, however, recall that, for them, religious education involved didactic instruction, the rote learning of Catechism answers and drill in ritual responses. While the threat of retribution ensured at least a token reproduction of old-style Irish Catholicism, the lessons seem to have largely ignored some major concerns of the pupils. As Peter Montini describes those days, they involved:

> Fear. Fear in the sense that you have to do this, or you must do this, or else! Sex was never really brought in and, in thinking back to those six years [that I was a student at CBC], I think that there might have been one or two times when a priest might have walked in and, without any kind of introduction, they started drawing and writing things on the board and that was it - that was the whole thing. We used to have a film once in a while on sex education - black and white faded film - but that was the only time that it was ever mentioned ... Mainly, [religious education] was learning definitions off from books, catechism and that ...there was a lot of just learning, learning off definitions and, you know, what is grace, sacraments, and so on.

Peter Montini's last years as a pupil at CBC coincided with the Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council which shattered many of the religious "certainties" that had previously characterised Catholic religious instruction. Some feel, however, that the full impact of Vatican II was not felt by the Congregation of Christian Brothers. Indeed, one Brother claims:

> When the religious Orders were asked to change after the Vatican Council, the Christian Brothers changed least of any Order - and this province changed the least of any Christian Brothers' province.

Nevertheless, the teaching of religion, especially for younger Brothers, has changed substantially, if at a somewhat slower pace than for some other Orders. But a second change which has had an impact upon religious education in Brothers' schools, the influence of which began to be felt soon after the Vatican Council and has been growing ever since, has been the influx of lay teachers and their involvement in the teaching of religion. All but one of the lay staff who teach religion in the secondary school, David Welsh, and most of those teaching in the primary school, are relatively young Catholics whose ideas about religion have been profoundly influenced by the Vatican Council. Some of them, like Bernadette Healy, appreciate the difficulties of some elderly Brothers whose religious security has been shaken by the Council changes and whose life in the religious community has been disturbed by outsiders:

> [Brother Callaghan] is obviously still very much way back before Vatican II ... Brothers that are like that tend to keep very much to themselves ... They have sort of been overtaken by the general movement of Catholic theology and social changes and, for them, it has probably been a lot harder because they went into an Order - they chose that very conservative, strict, disciplined type of life that they were looking for - so they probably find it harder to change than some of the others.

Cameron Pont, formerly a Christian Brother himself, supports the view that many Brothers feel a sense of insecurity in dealing with lay people, especially with women. He goes further and suggests that a reluctance to interact openly with outsiders is a product of their training. The resultant discomfort of some Brothers in sharing their personal beliefs with lay intruders, Cameron argues, militates against the incorporation of religious activities into the shared life of the school:

Interviewer: [You say that] the celebration of an annual and weekly cycle of religious events is not all that strong.

Cameron Pont: No, it isn't strong - and I think that probably comes from the fact that the Brothers are reticent. They are not willing to show their emotions and speak out in public. They are rather shy men and that is part of their tradition and part of their training. They are supposed to keep to themselves fairly well. I think it is not a good thing - it is one of the reasons why I chose to opt out [of the Order] even after twenty years [as a Christian Brother].

Some religious education teachers, young lay teachers in particular, are concerned that the traditional attitudes of some older Brothers, with their emphasis on didactic teaching methods and authoritarian classroom control, inhibit the creation of the sort of classroom atmosphere that would be conducive to a post-Vatican style of religious education:

Christine Hawke: If you spoke to someone here who taught it [even] five or six years ago [they'd say] it is really different now. There are a lot of people, like some of the older Brothers, who say they don't believe in all this, sort of, "rubbish" that is being taught now - who see it more into the individual and the way he feels and who would call it social studies. You could call it what you like - but it is coming under religious education.

When Christine Hawke and other lay religious education teachers, and some Brothers, talk about the "pre-Vatican" or "post-Vatican" attitudes of their fellow teachers, there is no doubt that the former term conveys disapproval. These teachers have some difficulty, however, in describing what a post-Vatican religious education course should look like and tend to fall back on very general, even simplistic, statements of intention:

Peter Daniels: There is more an emphasis on understanding rather than specific knowledge - it is more, well, a love of God type attitude rather than a fear of God attitude.

It is statements like these about religious education that concern Brother Jones. Although he thinks that "the greatest blessing of Vatican II was the recognition that Catholicity is not simply priests, brothers and

nuns", he is not entirely pleased with what passes for religious education in "the confusion after Vatican II". He contrasts CBC now with the certainty of former days when "the teachers were pretty well all Brothers and certainly all the Brothers were taking religion lessons". In his opinion:

> What is being dished up under the heading of religion is no more than, sort of, situation ethics or, you know, "love thy neighbour" in vague general terms - but the boys don't know their doctrine.

There is at CBC, therefore, a great diversity of opinion about appropriate approches to the teaching of religious education. Both content and pedagogy of religious education are contested.

(b) Pedagogy and religious education

Brother Jones has no doubts about what counts as religious knowledge:

> I always start off with the concept that Christ is, well, if Christ is not God then we are wasting our time, and so you start with the divinity of Christ. He claimed to be God, therefore you must go to the Old Testament to see that he fulfilled the prophecies. And then I like to do the Acts of the Apostles, particularly after you have done the Easter mystery and prepared them for that - and you see the infant Church and then, at least in a cursory fashion, you would take them through.

From this perspective the definition of religious education is non-problematic. But for another teacher, one who has undergone a dramatic shift in the way in which religion is taught, religious education is definitely not as simple as it once was:

> It seems to me that some years ago it was question-answer, question-anser, question-answer. I did teach it some years ago - they learnt! You just told them, "This is this and this is that". But now everything has changed the other way ... and it is up to them to begin their own values and feelings. And things like that you can't teach - I mean, you prepare the situation, but you can't say, "You have got to learn this and you have got to learn that." It is up to them to discover for themselves.

Such a pedagogical approach demands that the teacher abandon the role of dispenser of knowledge and custodian of "Catholic" morality and treat seriously the personal knowledge and values that pupils bring with them into the classroom. This, in turn, requires tolerance of a degree of ambiguity and uncertainty regarding what is to be defined as religious education. And for an inexperienced, albeit enthusiastic and committed, religious education teacher like Christine Hawke, adopting an open pedagogy carries with it two particular problems. Firstly, lessons lack structure and a clear sense of direction and progress:

> It is a really difficult subject to teach. You can't really teach it ... You can't really state an objective and then say, "At the end of this lesson these children will have grasped this concept".

The second problem is a more complex one which requires a little unravelling. It relates to the difficulty of establishing the type of pupil-teacher relationship that will facilitate an open approach to religious education:

> It should be a more open relationship so that you can sort of sit around and discuss - and therefore the teacher should be more the leader of the group rather than the teacher of the group.

This latter problem has proved to be insurmountable, for the present at least, for Christine Hawke:

> You have got the situation of the boys. You can't do that with the boys here because they are conditioned that the teacher is up there [at the front of the class] and he or she is the authority. And if you go against that, well, they can't handle it.

The type of classroom relationship that might encourage personal expression, however, is foreign to the traditions of the Christian Brothers, according to the religious education coordinator, Brother Gordon:

> There are certain traditions which we have had ... We have been, traditionally, regarded at our schools as being authoritarian ... Personally, ... I would be disappointed if some people didn't regard our school system as authoritarian because in my mind [anything else] would mean a lack of discipline. So we have had a tradition of fairly high standards of discipline.

Brother Gordon regards discipline as an essential requirement of Catholicism:

> I truly believe that no person can be a Catholic unless he has got self-discipline ... the ability to be able to do what we don't feel like doing at the moment ... and I am convinced [that] ... one of the reasons why there is a fall off in faith, particularly amongst youth, is that they have not got sufficient discipline to be Catholics.

And an authoritarian school with emphasis upon discipline ensured that:

> When the children are taught they stay taught ... so those kids had to learn it, that was all there was about it.

While such attitudes towards the appropriate relationship between teachers and pupils prevail, an open climate of sharing in the exploration of values and of faith is difficult for Christine Hawke and her colleagues to establish.

5 RELIGION AND THE CURRICULUM

(a) The individualisation of religion

The data indicate that the treatment of religion at CBC is extremely variable and that CBC's religious purpose has been diffused into individual classrooms or, more accurately, into individual religious education classes. There is no evidence of an overall policy regarding religion. Instead, religion is seen as an individual enterprise rather than as one which pervades the curriculum:

Question: What are the rituals of the religious life which are being experienced by the children that have been sent here for a good Christian education?

Bernadette Healy: I think it varies from teacher to teacher, class to class, and probably area to area. I don't know.

When it comes to religion being incorporated into other subjects, some teachers have experienced difficulties:

Heather Verdun: I don't know, perhaps we don't talk about [religion] a lot ... I know, some of the things that I have said in English sometimes, or in politics, about social justice apart from being just the decent thing to do, what about our Christian response? And they look at you as if you are something from outer space.

Clearly, Heather believes that her pupils have learnt to maintain a strict boundary between religion and other subjects. She is concerned that staff and pupils, she believes, do not talk freely about religion and she attributes the puzzlement of students at the introduction of religious issues into other subjects to a lack of any such open discussion. Religion remains largely a private concern in what is outwardly and publicly a Catholic enterprise.

Religious education teachers, then, vary in their approaches to the teaching of their subject. In the uncertainty that is associated with influx of lay teachers into CBC and the aftermath of Vatican II, and in the absence of any apparent school focus, religious education has become a matter for individual teachers in their own classrooms rather than an institutional theme.

(b) The coordination of religious education

Cameron Pont, whose years of service at CBC are exceeded only by David Welsh's, is disappointed that, in his opinion, the religious thrust of the school has been weakened during his time there. He suggests that a lack of religious coordination throughout the school has contributed to the blunting of its overall religious purpose. This is evident now, he believes, in the haphazard planning that surrounds religious education, and which thus dissipates the religious purpose into a number of disconnected individual efforts:

> I would suggest that CBC, over recent times anyway, hasn't had as its main thrust being a religious school ... Now, I don't see that as being a number one priority of the school. And if people are going to say that this is a religious establishment - well then it should be, ought to be, the priority. We should be meeting to plan strategy and how effectively this is going to be carried out - not leaving it to some haphazard kind of organisation through the school.

A more comprehensive and integrated approach to the place of religion in the CBC curriculum is unlikely to grow out of Brother Gordon's coordination, however. He sees his role as one of offering passive support rather than active leadership:

> As far as being the religious knowledge coordinator is concerned, the role that I see as mine is to assist the religious education teachers in whatever way they want to be assisted - that is, if I can assist them.

As he explains, his job as coordinator is made all the more difficult because of different approaches and attitudes towards religion and the teaching of it that exist within CBC's heterogeneous staff:

> The teaching of religious knowledge is, to a very large extent, left to the individual teacher - the reason for that being that while a certain approach would appeal to one teacher, another teacher wouldn't be comfortable with that approach, and that is why there is no religious knowledge syllabus as such. There are guidelines which have been produced by the Catholic Education Office ... They are guidelines only - the actual way in which those guidelines are implemented is, to a very large extent, left to the individual teacher.

The mix of post-Vatican and pre-Vatican orientations towards Catholicism and of religious and lay teachers of religious education is complicated even more by differences in pupil-teacher relationships and in attitudes towards what counts as religious knowledge. From what Brother Gordon says, it appears that there is little communication or exchange of views between teachers holding different viewpoints. The teaching of religion remains the preserve of individuals:

> In CBC it is left virtually to the individual teacher as to what is going to be taught.

(c) Religion and CBC students

It has been noted that the response of senior students to the religious aspects of CBC appears to be less wholehearted than that of primary pupils. The evidence suggests that a more casual attitude to prayer and religious education generally begins to appear at about year 8 level:

Marie Campagna: In my year 8 we follow our own sort of syllabus or whatever and I tend to use a lot of social issues. I don't really stick to biblical things. I find that they are not, sort of, contrary to anything in the Catholic religion ... they seem pretty content in that respect ... At prayers they sort of stand up and they have that respect ... but that becomes meaningless after a while ... They just know that they have to stand up.

By the time students reach years 11 and 12 the opposition of a number of them to religious education is more apparent. The librarian supports the tales of a number of teachers who recount occasions when they have discovered in the school library large numbers of absconders from the compulsory daily religion classes. Many of these senior pupils simply absent themselves from the classes and spend the time working on other subjects. The two reasons typically given by pupils for such behaviour are summarised by Heather Verdun:

> From what the kids have said, and from what some of the other teachers have said, a lot of the R.E. that is being taught in the senior school has no relevance to the boys. Especially in HSC a lot of them resent the fact that they have five periods a week in R.E. and they would rather be doing something else [related to] HSC which is the be all and end all.

Talking with senior students at CBC one soon learns that the daily religious education lesson is regarded by many a waste of time. This is partly because it takes time away from academic subjects that are seen as more important, and partly because the lessons are regarded as being "bible bashing" which is "the same thing that we had every year I've been here". Several teachers are sympathetic to the second objection to the religion lessons:

Don Reynolds: What they need in religion is how to live in the modern world, not this academic stuff they give them. Most of the kids in my form are cheesed off with religion and the church and the whole bit.

Question: Do you think the formal teaching of religion here does more harm than good?

Don Reynolds: I do. They're not interested in the academic side of it. It should be the liveliest, most open lesson of the whole day. Everyone should have a point of view and they should discuss it. But I've seen the classes - you can see in their eyes that they're not with it.

Question: Religion is really the justification for this separate system of Catholic schools, isn't it?

Don Reynolds: That's exactly my point. The whole system is supposed to be based on religion and yet some of [the Brothers] are so cold. I probably notice it more than others because I've come in after years in [the public school] system.

Don Reynolds' final comments recall a point made earlier by Christine Hawke - that an open sharing of ideas and an open approach to topical, social issues in religion classes requires a particular type of teacher-pupil relationship that is not widespread at CBC. The pedagogical style that is typically associated with the Brothers does not invite frank student input into religious education - and this, more than anything else, seems to have disillusioned a large number of pupils.

The belief of Don Reynolds that many pupils are "cheesed off with religion and the church and the whole bit" seems to be readily supported in conversations with senior students. As Smith points out:

> ... the participation in activities such as the before class prayers seemed perfunctory and with little involvement and meaning. Second, some of the comments of the boys, and usually the older ones, in various informal conversations carried the flavour of "I go to mass because my mum makes me" (1982:17).

Closer examination, however, reveals that many have a deep interest in their religion but have difficulty in accepting some of the tenets of Catholicism. They want to air their doubts and objections and to discuss areas of controversy in the Church but feel that there is no forum for them to do so. Those who have been critical of traditional Catholicism during religion periods claim that they have been told, "If you don't believe in the Catholic religion you shouldn't be at this school". Echoing Don Reynolds, these students argue that "religious education does

more harm than good in terms of what the Brothers are trying to achieve" because they "turn you off religion completely". The overwhelming message from senior students is that they want religious education to address their personal crises of faith and their moral difficulties. It appears that at CBC, however, the soul-searching and religious doubts that so often accompany adolescence do not count as issues for religious education. It is for these reasons that many senior students regard religious education as "a total waste of time" and refer to religion classes as "rest periods".

Many senior students find that they can talk more easily with lay teachers than with the Brothers who are their religion teachers:

> The Brothers don't understand the problems we have - they're sort of different. They're kind of out of the world but lay teachers are more in the world and understand the same sort of life.

One teacher of senior classes, who is identified by both fellow teachers and students as "a good bloke" whom boys can talk to, is Jim Karn. His familiarity with them and their confidence in him is apparent to others at CBC. This leads to comparisons between him and some Brothers:

Heather Verdun: From the boys' point of view the laicisation of the staff wouldn't be a bad thing because I think most of them feel that the Brothers are too remote from reality ... [but] people like Jim Karn - the boys really love him and he is seen as being a real human being ... I think most of them feel that the Christian Brothers are not really in touch and they don't really know what is going on and the pressures that the kids are under.

Jim Karn is certainly critical of the religious diet that senior students receive, and of some of their teachers:

> I'm buggered if I know what they do in religion classes. No, that's not quite true - I do know because they tell me. Bloody Mac (David Welsh) and Mother (Brother Carter) just bible-bash all the time - the first letter to the Corinthians and all that stuff. I suppose that's all they can do because they wouldn't have a bloody clue about life. What the hell could they tell the kids. The only religion teacher they've got any respect for is poor old Gil [O'Hara]. Apparently he tries to get them thinking and talking about these things and is pretty open with them.

He is also critical of the students who disregard much of what they are told in religious education but do not persevere in challenging their teachers:

> "Etiquette brings respect, and respect equals love." This is what they're doing in religion. They all laugh about it, but when I tell them they should challenge Mother about statements like that they haven't got any answer. They laugh at him but they accept it anyway.

Such acceptance without conviction, he argues, leads the products of CBC to be unquestioning and compliant in wider social concerns:

> We've been doing this in legal studies - custom and the law, and the way that a lot of law comes from customs. But they just won't see that schools are agents for promoting certain customs and values that then underline the laws. ... Some aren't sure whether it's against the law to commit adultery. I asked them, "Well, just what is actually wrong with adultery?" Do you know what I got? "It just is, it's a sin". They won't question these things and see where they come from. They've been told something's right or wrong so they accept it even though they don't follow it.

He adds:

> I suppose I'll get the boot from here one of these days for talking about these things.

Many teachers feel, however, that the religious effectiveness of CBC will be minimal until more people are prepared, like Jim Karn, to engage in critical and open dialogue regarding religion and other aspects of the school. But, for the present, the "surface" treatment of religion, diverse opinions about what counts as religious knowledge, and about the style of pedagogy and relationships between teachers and pupils that is appropriate for religious education, have yet to be confronted at CBC.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A decline in membership of the Christian Brothers, the increase in number and proportion of lay teachers - including non-Catholics - in Catholic schools, the transformation of Catholicism and the shattering of the old

religious certainties by the second Vatican Council, have all deeply affected religious education at CBC. No longer is religious education wholly the concern of Brothers. No longer is there consensus about what counts as "a good Catholic education". The reproduction of old style religion at CBC through catechism based rote-learning and drill in ritual responses backed up by threats of retribution now appears to have given way to a degree of ambiguity and uncertainty.

This ambiguity and uncertainty, and even frustration, is in no way more apparent than in the absence of critical and open debate regarding Catholicism. CBC does not openly and directly address the current controversies within the Church. In fact, coordination of religious education is purposely vague and remote so as to enable teachers with very different approaches to religious education to operate in an unthreatened and unquestioned manner. Thus, religious education has become largely a series of separate, individual undertakings as some teachers pursue their own religious efforts from within their own classrooms.

Only in the relatively small primary area of the school is there much evidence of a cooperative approach to religious education. By contrast, the religious ambience of the much larger secondary school is much less pronounced. There, religion competes unfavourably with other priorities such as academic ones. This is apparent in the timetabling of lessons which reflects the emergence of an attitude towards religious education which treats it as a discrete subject unit that is to be entrusted to Brothers or to "safe" lay teachers. Senior classes in religious education, particularly, are generally taken by Brothers.

Both the treatment of religion as the concern of individual teachers within their own classrooms, and its reduction to a discrete subject within the curriculum, limit the extent to which Catholicism pervades the school.

Morevoer, the overwhelming "academic emphasis" of CBC, coupled with a restrictive entrance policy and the historical emphasis upon social mobility, denies an absolute priority for religious formation. Thus, not only is the traditional justification for separate Catholic schools questionable in the case of CBC, but also the establishment of a post-Vatican "faith community" becomes increasingly difficult and unlikely. Hence the frustration of some religious education teachers, those who hold post-Vatican attitudes, with colleagues who are "way back before Vatican II". Moreover, an open, sharing approach to religion - involving both teachers and pupils as a necessary prerequisite for a "faith community" - is impeded by the authoritarian and didactic pedagogies of some teachers, especially elderly Brothers. In particular, their approach to religious education excludes consideration of the "crises of faith" that are common amongst young adults - a major source of discontent amongst senior students regarding religion.

While many lay teachers are reluctant to take classes in religious education, or even to talk about it, students claim that they prefer to discuss religious and other problems with lay teachers rather than with Brothers. The life of Brothers is regarded as being too remote, whereas lay teachers are thought to generally share with them a more or less common reality. Teachers like Jim Karn, then, are privy to some confidences of senior students - amongst them being their discontent with religious education. Karn believes that these students have learned compliance - that they accept without conviction what they are told by Brothers - and that this leads them to be socially and politically conforming in a broader sense.

Despite the pervasiveness of religious images and artefacts at CBC, then, the place of religion is problematic. The promise of a deeply felt religious unity that is held out by the surface symbolism not only camouflages the fragmentation and contestation of what counts as religious education, but also

belies a tentativeness in confronting any religious controversies. Although individual teachers of religion determine their own curricula, a predominant "Brothers' view" of religion persists, and teachers who adopt more "progressive" attitudes towards prayer and religious education feel that they are diverging from that which is expected by CBC's religious administrators, the Brothers' community, and parents of CBC pupils. On the surface, the statues are in place, regular lessons in religious education are timetabled, the religious education coordinator is granted a time allocation to coordinate the subject - it is business as usual. According to Brother Ernest, his confreres, especially many of those older than he, are concerned about "preserving the Brothers' securities". The impression that CBC is a stable and traditional "Brothers' school" persists, therefore, despite the multiple changes that are gradually transforming religious education - beneath the seemingly untroubled surface - within individual classrooms.

Although the purpose of religious formation, which is the essential justification for the existence of Catholic schools, is made explicit in primary grades, the internalisation of any religious ambiance by senior pupils is variable. Moreover, the importance of education for academic success and examination results has clearly assumed priority over religious education. A symptom of the academic emphasis, a selective entrance policy, seems to make a mockery of the proudly stated tradition of the Christian Brothers of service to the needy.

Over the generations the fierceness with which examination success has been pursued seems to have resulted in CBC's identification with the middle class values that facilitate social mobility. The academic orientation and emphasis upon examination results ensured social mobility despite widespread prejudice. Ironically, however, the very success of the school in promoting social mobility may have ultimately alienated Catholics from their class

origins. By uncritically embracing and reinforcing the dominant curriculum which is essential for social mobility, teachers at CBC have attempted to prepare Catholic children to take their places in the existing social order without questioning it. CBC, then, has become a Catholic school in which one can find:

> little evidence of Church schools forming a new man, rather than the man required by, and fitting into, the established order (Buckhorn, 1979:113).

The case of CBC is one in which access to the established social order, as evidenced by the priority given to academic subjets and preparation of pupils for examinations in comparison to that given to religious education, is treated in a mechanistic and unproblematic manner. The Christian message at CBC, instead of provoking analysis of the justice of human relationships, including class relationships, has become merely an agent of social integration (Bates, 1982; Watkins, 1984).

The historical task of educating Newburyport Catholic youth for social mobility is seen as part of the apostolate of the Christian Brothers to serve the needy - Catholics having been regarded historically as victims of prejudice and of their class location. But the mission of service has become a conservative reproductive mission - one of equipping middle class Catholics to take their places in a predominantly middle class society.

The clients of CBC, both pupils and parents, pursue and accumulate the commodities - starting with a CBC education - that are badges of individuated penetration to the higher rungs of social life and which undermine older patterns of community and religious solidarity (Goldman & Tickamyer, 1984). That this effect, which is partly the consequence of the Brothers' emphasis on social mobility, was unintended and unforseen is apparent in the way in which many Brothers, especially Brother Gordon, express disappointment at the materialism and consumerism of modern society which, they believe, has seeped

into the consciousness of Catholics in Newburyport and contributes to the dearth of religious vocations and decline of spiritual values. But one could argue that educating several generations of Catholic boys to take their places in the middle and upper levels of society may have resulted in the products of Brothers' schools eventually accepting middle class materialistic values to the impoverishment of spiritual and religious values. Rather than transforming the Australian middle class through "the message of Jesus" as Brother Gordon and his predecessors had hoped to do, some Catholics were instead seduced by the consumerism of their adopted class. Thus, the class system is not transformed - rather, sections of the Catholic community who "made good" through education may be said to have simply appropriated, uncritically, middle class values and cultural moves. They were merely co-opted and became accommodated within the dominant order. It is merely an extension of the same logic for many of these "successful" Catholics to abandon CBC and accumulate the more expensive commodity of an education from one of the more prestigious Protestant colleges for their own children, for such a commodity may facilitate entry to a still higher level of society.

When the Christian Brothers and other religious Orders established secondary schools in Australia in the early twentieth century, they were satisfying a genuine need for Catholic schools at that time. Public secondary education was still virtually non-existent at the time of CBC's foundation, and Catholics were excluded from the independent Protestant schools. Catholics felt that they were victims of prejudice and exclusion and sought to compete equally with advantaged groups. This explains the early emphasis on public service examinations since entrance to public service positions was determined by examination performance, or "merit", in contrast to many areas where Catholics and Irish were spurned. An element of concern for the disadvantaged can still be detected at CBC in the recent emergence of "social

justice" as a curriculum issue in religious education. Therefore, although the ultimate result is that "the meritocratic principle of social mobility merely legitimates inequality, making its continued existence acceptable as a kind of safety-valve" (Enwistle, 1978:10), the CBC example is nonetheless of real and substantial historical importance.

Many participants, especially older Brothers, praise the living Brothers' tradition in which education involves a peculiar blend of harsh methods of control and a mission of serving and genuinely helping pupils. But, although such an orientation can be seen as continuing the Brothers' historical mission of educating Catholic boys for advancement, the competitive selection and promotion of pupils calls into question the most fundamental tradition of all of the Christian Brothers - that of service to the needy. For in one of the supreme ironies of education at CBC, the school's entrance policy tends to exclude those children who could most readily be regarded as needy - economically, intellectually and spiritually. The needy are now deemed unacceptable for entrance. And, in a more subtle denial of service to the needy, the generally wholehearted and unreflective support of the hegemonic curriculum (Connell et al., 1982) with its associated practices of pedagogy and evaluation, has been shown to entrench a social order in which the disadvantaged are blamed for their lowly position on the social and economic scale because of their possession of too few and inappropriate cultural resources (Bourdieu,1971,1977; Apple, 1979, 1982). By satisfying students on the basis of "academic" knowledge, CBC, along with other schools, plays its part in "fitting students to the preexisting roles for them in the cultural, political and economic matrix of post-industrial capitalism" (Wood, 1984:228).

It is in the area of religious education that a potential challenge to the processes of the hegemonic curriculum is discernible. Some teachers of religion, particularly younger lay teachers, are attempting to develop a

"post-Vatican" spirit of community and critical inquiry in their classes. Such an approach avoids the simple presentation or imposition of "correct" religious knowledge and encourages instead open discussion and a common search for values that are appropriate for a faith community that is based upon broad Christian principles of social justice. These teachers are conscious of the incompatibility of physical intimidation as a form of discipline with the notion of an enquiring and sharing faith community. In such a community authority relations would be based upon mutual respect rather than fear and coercion. The growing number of women teachers have taken a lead in challenging intimidatory and demeaning disciplinary practices and in transforming teacher-pupil relations.

CBC, along with other Catholic schools, is also facing a crisis of identity which is veiled by the school's superficial stability and uniformity. Praetz (1982) argues that this crisis of identity has arisen in the late 1970s and 1980s, ironically, because Catholic schools no longer face hostility to their existence but are now socially accepted. This is certainly the case in Newburyport where CBC is highly regarded, especially in the business sector. Praetz notes that other changes also altered the nature of Catholic education:

> Catholics were no longer predominantly working class, excluded from positions of power and authority in Australian society. The Irish character of the Catholic church had also changed. Further, in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, Catholics as a social group had become less distinctive in behaviour and belief. The mutual hostility between different denominations has ebbed, resulting in a new flowering of ecumenical cooperation based on the shared affirmation of religious values in a secular pluralist society (Praetz, 1982:66).

The virtual disappearance of the prejudice and discrimination of which Catholics were victims has removed the oppositional rationale upon which the foundation of CBC was based.

The uncertainty and potential crisis at CBC is perhaps most clearly revealed in the confused approach to the teaching of religion. In senior grades, it is almost exclusively the work of the Brothers whom, it is felt, do not trust such work to lay teachers apart from the devoted and compliant ex-Brother, David Welsh. One of the factors which influenced the reformist John Carlton to leave CBC after twelve years of dedicated service was his belief that he was not "trusted" by the religious administration to teach religion to senior pupils. Some lay teachers of religion in junior secondary classes believe that they are merely "plugging gaps". Yet the existence of independent Catholic schools has always been justified on the grounds that religious knowledge pervaded the entire curriculum and, indeed, the entire life of the school. It is their raison d'etre. Even CBC's ostensibly all-important drive for academic success and social mobility is legitimated on the grounds of a religious rather than a material movement. Apart from a mission of Christian justice to the dispossessed the elevation of Catholics to the higher levels of society would "spread the message of Jesus" in those sectors and allow prominent Catholics the opportunity to propound Catholic viewpoints on moral and controversial issues. But the decline of religion as an educational priority makes CBC appear more and more like a relatively inexpensive version of the elite ruling class schools (Connell et al., 1982) with which it is increasingly being compared in Newburyport (Augus, 1984).

"Post-Vatican" teachers, mainly young, lay teachers of junior secondary and primary religion, however, have embraced more liberal approaches to religious education and connect it particularly with social studies through the theme of "social justice'. This is a theme with which a number of reformist teachers seem to resonate, and it clearly has implications for a number of curriculum issues. Indeed, it is through curriculum reform in keeping with the notion of social justice that transformation at CBC is most

likely to occur, for such curriculum considerations will confront and force critical reflection upon the most cherished and long held traditions of Christian Brothers schools, including those of order, an academic emphasis, and, most importantly, service to the needy. Such considerations have implications for religious education, especially for the emerging theme of social justice. CBC teachers would need, therefore, to take seriously the arguments of Catholic educators who criticise the existing system of Catholic education and claim that, in the late twentieth century:

> ... those who proclaim the Gospel message do so from a position within a stratified society, and that, whatever those proclaiming it may think about it, it is being proclaimed to a dominated class from within a dominant class, the very opposite of what happened in the beginning. How is it possible they ask that Christianity, which in Gospel times was a haven of liberation, of social protest and repressed by power, has become an agent of social integration to the advantage of the same power? (Leavey, 1980:40).

To counter such criticism, CBC might be less concerned with simple evangelisation and social mobility, and more with genuine liberation which would involve a critical analysis of power structures (Leavey, 1980) and of the political implications of pursuing social justice (Flood, 1979; Edwards, 1976). A reappraisal of Catholic education would emphasise that the Church and school have a part to play in social protest as well as in social integration (Leavey, 1980; Flood, 1979; Houtard & Rousseau, 1971; Noone, 1983). Catholic education, therefore, would involve reflection upon controversial issues and critical scrutiny of existing social situations (Edwards, 1976), even if established Catholic viewpoints, or the Brothers' traditions, were to suffer in the confrontation with values of social justice (Crudden, 1972). From this point of view, questions about the role of CBC become more problematic, and critical analysis of the liberating possibilities of Catholic education would become possible.

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